WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   1.   A method for distributing programming, the method comprising:

2.   transmitting a first set of program segments according to a schedule of

3. programming;

4.   storing a second set of program segments on a server, at least one of the first

5. set of program segments having a counterpart in the second set of program segments;

6.   maintaining user authorizations to program segments on the server, wherein

7. the user authorizations include:

8.   a record of the number of times a user has previously been given

9. program control over a particular program segment from the server; and

10.   a limit on the number of times the user is authorized to have program

11. control over the particular program segment from the server;

12.   detecting a request from the user for program control of the particular program

13. segment; and

14.   determining whether to grant program control over the particular program

15. segment to the user in accordance with the user authorizations.

1.   2.   The method according to claim 1 wherein the number of times a user

2. has previously been given program control over a particular program segment from the server

3. and the number of times the user is authorized to have program control over the particular

4. program segment from the server are determined according to access of the particular

5. program segment from the server.

1.   3.   The method according to claim 1 wherein the number of times a user

2. has previously been given program control over a particular program segment from the server

3. and the number of times the user is authorized to have program control over the particular

4. program segment from the server are determined according to viewing of the particular

5. program segment from the server.

1.   4.   The method according to claim 1 wherein the limit on the number of

2. times the user is authorized to have program control over the particular program segment

3. from the server is determined individually for the particular program segment.

1.   5.   The method according to claim 1 wherein the limit on the number of

2. times the user is authorized to have program control over the particular program segment

3   from the server is determined according to a categorization of the particular program segment

4   within a group of program segments.

1   6.   The method according to claim 1 wherein the limit on the number of

2   times the user is authorized to have program control over the particular program segment

3   from the server is equal to the number of times the particular program segment is transmitted

4   according to the schedule of programming.

1   7.   The method according to claim 1 wherein the limit on the number of

2   times the user is authorized to have program control over the particular program segment

3   from the server is sufficiently large that the user is substantially authorized to have unlimited

4   access to the particular program segment from the server.

1   8.   The method according to claim 1 further comprising providing a

2   plurality of program-control schemes for selection by the user,

3   wherein maintaining the user authorizations to program segments on a server

4   comprises establishing the limit on the number of times the user is authorized to have

5   program control over the particular program segment from the server in accordance with a

6   program-control scheme selected by the user.

1   9.   The method according to claim 8 further comprising changing the

2   program-control scheme selected by the user.

1   10.   The method according to claim 8 wherein determining whether to grant

2   program control over the particular program segment to the user further comprises detecting a

3   request from the user to change the program-control scheme selected by the user in exchange

4   for authorization by the user to pay for such change, and wherein maintaining the user

5   authorizations to program segments on the server comprises changing the limit on the number

6   of times the user is authorized to have program control over the particular program segment

7   from the server in accordance with the changed program-control scheme.

1   11.   The method according to claim 1 wherein, if the number of times the

2   user has previously been given program control over a particular program segment from the

3   server is greater than or equal to the limit on the number times the user is authorized to have

4   program control over the particular program segment from the server, determining whether to

5   grant program control over the particular program segment to the user comprises transmitting

6   a menu of options.

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1   12.   The method according to claim 11 wherein determining whether to

2 grant program control over the particular program segment to the user further comprises

3 detecting a request from the user to grant program control of the particular program segment

4 in exchange for authorization by the user to pay individually for such program control.

1   13.   The method according to claim 11 wherein determining whether to

2 grant program control over the particular program segment to the user further comprises

3 detecting a request from the user to adjust the limit on the number of times the user is

4 authorized to have program control over the particular program segment from the server in

5 exchange for authorization by the user to pay for such adjustment, and wherein maintaining

6 the user authorizations to program segments on the server comprises adjusting the limit on

7 the number of times the user is authorized to have program control over the particular

8 program segment from the server.

1   14.   The method according to claim 1 wherein the particular program

2 segment comprises one of a video program and an audio program.

1   15.   A method for distributing programming, the method comprising:

2   transmitting a first set of program segments according to a schedule of

3 programming;

4   storing a second set of program segments on a server, at least one of the first

5 set of program segments having a counterpart in the second set of program segments;

6   recording the number of times a user has previously been given program

7 control over program segments from the server and a limit on the number times the user is

8 authorized to have program control over program segments from the server;

9   detecting a request from the user for program control of a particular program

10 segment; and

11   determining whether to grant program control over the particular program

12 segment by comparing the number of times the user has previously been given program

13 control over program segments from the server and the limit on the number of times the user

14 is authorized to have program control over program segments from the server.

1   16.   The method according to claim 15 wherein the number of times a user

2 has previously been given program control over program segments from the server and the

3   number of times the user is authorized to have program control over program segments from

4   the server are determined according to access of program segments from the server.

1   17.   The method according to claim 15 wherein the number of times a user

2   has previously been given program control over program segments from the server and the

3   number of times the user is authorized to have program control over program segments from

4   the server are determined according to viewing of program segments from the server.

1   18.   The method according to claim 15 further comprising providing a

2   plurality of program-control schemes for selection by the user,

3   wherein the limit on the number of times the user is authorized to have

4   program control over program segments from the server is established in accordance with a

5   program-control scheme selected by the user.

1   19.   The method according to claim 18 further comprising changing the

2   program-control scheme selected by the user.

1   20.   The method according to claim 15 wherein the particular program

2   segment comprises one of a video program and an audio program.

1   21.   A system for distributing programming, the system comprising:

2   a transmitter configured to transmit a first set of program segments according

3   to a program schedule;

4   a server configured to store a second set of program segments, at least one of

5   the first set of program segments having a counterpart in the second set of program segments;

6   a record of user authorizations to program segments on the server, wherein the

7   record of user authorizations includes:

8   the number of times a user has previously been given program control

9   over a particular program segment from the server; and

10   a limit on the number of times the user is authorized to have program

11   control over the particular program segment from the server;

12   a detector configured to detect a request from the user for program control of

13   the particular program segment; and

14   a controller in communication with the transmitter, the server, the record of

15   user authorizations, and the detector, the controller being configured to operate the

16   transmitter, the server, and the detector to provide program control of the particular program

17   segment to the user in accordance with the user authorizations.

1   22.   The system according to claim 21 wherein the limit on the number of

2   times the user is authorized to have program control over the particular program segment

3   from the server is determined individually for the particular program segment.